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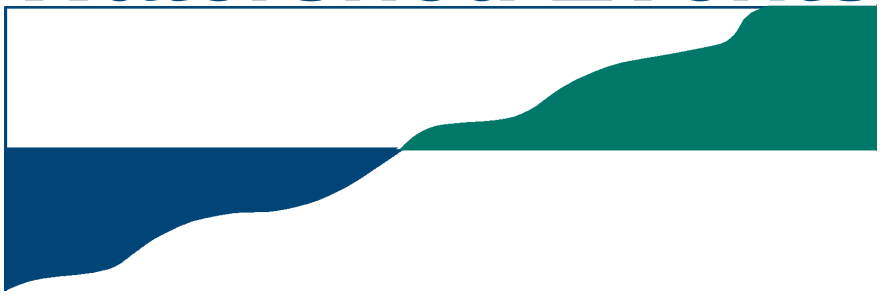
Watershed Events



A Bulletin on Sustaining Water Resources and Ecosystems

In This Issue…

This issue of *Watershed Events* features stories from the Watershed Assistance Grants (WAG) program. WAGs support the organizational and institutional development of locally led watershed partnerships. At the National Watershed Forum, continued funding of the WAG program was a key recommendation.

On The Inside…

National Watershed Forum Results in Challenging Recommendations

From June 27 to July 1, about 500 community leaders and senior decision makers from around the country attended the National Watershed Forum in Arlington, Virginia. The Forum resulted in a tidal wave of energy and good ideas for protecting and restoring watersheds and for supporting the work of local watershed initiatives. Several federal agencies, in partnership with CH2M Hill, provided funding to make the Forum possible.

Delegates participated in small, facilitated discussion groups organized around 19 specific issues. The Forum focused on collaborative approaches—getting industry and environmentalists, local, state, and federal agencies, scientists, and citizens to work together to solve the problems facing our nation's watersheds. Geographically, politically, and culturally diverse people shared their visions and explored new directions to sustain watersheds into the next century.

See Targeted Recommendations, page 2

Linda Fisher, Deputy Administrator for EPA, delivered the keynote address at the National Watershed Forum in June.

National Watershed Forum Discussion Groups

- Funding and Technical Support
- Structure and Function of Watershed Groups
- Participation and Partnerships
- Education and Outreach
- Leadership and Facilitation
- Source Water Protection
- Instream Flows
- Data Collection, Monitoring, Research Needs, and Information Management
- Watershed Planning and Evaluation
- Smart Growth
- Habitat
- Endangered Species
- Jurisdiction and Coordination
- Total Maximum Daily Loads

A final Forum report is available at www.epa.gov/owow/forum/.

The National Watershed Forum gave local watershed groups, the private sector, and government leaders a unique opportunity to discuss how to improve the nation's waters and how to work together to accomplish identified goals.

photos by John McShane

Targeted Recommendations

The cross-cutting recommendations (listed in the box below) represent only a fraction of the Forum's valuable recommendations. Other recommendations directed to Congress, the private sector, federal agencies, state governments, local watershed groups, tribes, foundations, and others are presented in the body of the Forum report, which is available on-line at www.epa.gov/owow/forum. A companion document, *Discussion Group Proceedings*, includes a summary of the discussion groups' deliberations. Additional information about the National Watershed Forum can be obtained from Connie Lewis, the Meridian Institute, 970-513-8340, e-mail: connielewis@merid.org.

Cross-Cutting Recommendations at the National Watershed Forum

The following cross-cutting recommendations were highlighted during the plenary sessions or developed simultaneously in numerous discussion groups. Many need to be implemented in a coordinated manner by several organizations or agencies.

- Develop a flexible, integrated, and diversified national watershed strategy/delivery system.
- Create a quasi-public (non-federal) Watershed Trust Fund/Endowment to be used for restoration, protection, advocacy, education, management, facilitating local needs, research, and other priorities.
- Provide additional support for subsequent Regional Watershed Roundtables and future National Watershed Forums.
- Conduct a Tribal Watershed Forum.
- Implement a national media campaign to highlight the importance of and foster general awareness of watershed issues.
- Establish a "clearinghouse" to provide one-stop shopping that would enhance the flow of information about watershed protection and restoration, technical assistance and funding, and other relevant data.
- Undertake a concerted effort to address the issue of defining "a healthy watershed," encompassing chemical, physical, biological, hydrological, social, meteorological, elements, etc., and considering the interrelationships between all elements.
- Provide federal coordinators to assist local watershed partnerships.

Watershed Events

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Watershed Events provides updated and timely information to professionals and others interested in the development and implementation of the watershed approach and in achieving watershed goals. The watershed approach focuses on mitigating the primary threats to ecosystem and human health and involving stakeholders to take action in an integrated, holistic manner. Please direct any questions or comments to

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Protecting and Restoring America's Watersheds: Status, Trends, and Initiatives in Watershed Management

This new interagency report published by EPA's Office of Water describes watershed-related activities—projects, programs, and coordination efforts—implemented in the recent past. It explores the successes of selected case studies and evaluates programs and partnerships representative of the larger national efforts under way to move stakeholders toward a watershed management approach. The report focuses on areas that many stakeholders believe still need improvement—the building and sustaining of partnerships, coordination among government agencies, watershed monitoring and assessment data, and evaluations of project success.

To obtain copies, call the National Environmental Service Center for Environmental Publications, 800-490-9198. Ask for EPA publication 840-R-00-001. The report is also posted on OW's "What's New" web site at www.epa.gov/ow/new.html (www.epa.gov/owow/protecting).

Five-Star Restoration Challenge Grant Application Due March 1, 2002

The National Association of Counties, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Wildlife Habitat Council, in cooperation with EPA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other sponsors, are soliciting applications for the Five-Star Restoration Challenge Grant Program. The Five-Star Program provides modest financial assistance on a competitive basis to support community-based wetland, riparian, and coastal habitat restoration projects that build diverse partnerships and foster local natural resource stewardship through education, outreach, and training activities. In 2001, 60 projects received grants of on average $10,000. About 230 applications were received.

photo by John McShane

The stars in "Five-Star" are the partners, funders, and/or participants necessary to complete the project. They include schools or youth organizations, local or tribal governments, local businesses or corporations, conservation organizations or local citizens groups, state and federal resource management agencies, and foundations or other funders. Projects must involve diverse partnerships of ideally five organizations that contribute funding, land, technical assistance, workforce support, and/or other in-kind services.

Projects must include a strong on-the-ground wetland, riparian, or coastal habitat restoration component. Applicants must demonstrate that measurable ecological, educational, social, and/or economic benefits are expected to result from the completion of the project.

Preference will be given to projects that (1) are part of a larger watershed or community stewardship effort, (2) include specific provisions for long-term management and protection, and (3) demonstrate the value of innovative, collaborative approaches to restoring the nation's waters. Application materials are available on the NFWF web site at www.nfwf.org/programs/5star-rfp.htm.

Watershed Assistance Grants Sought by Many

In 1998 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency teamed up with River Network, a nonprofit organization that specializes in organizational skill building, to establish the Watershed Assistance Grants (WAG) program.

The goal of the program is to build the capacity of existing or new watershed partnerships. Grassroots organizations have long appealed for a dedicated source of funding to support their organizational development and long-term effectiveness.

The WAG program continues to gain in popularity, and demand for funding far exceeds available funds. More than 500 requests, totaling $13 million, have been received. To date, 80 projects have been funded, totaling $1.2 million. This issue of *Watershed Events* highlights just a few of the outstanding local efforts that have benefited from the WAG program.

For more information about WAGs, visit River Network's web site at www.rivernetwork.org.

Fish Passage Barriers Being Removed in Rogue River Basin

Once among the most abundant salmon habitats in the Northwest, the Rogue River and its tributaries have suffered from decades of dam building, deteriorating water quality, and increased urbanization. The Rogue Basin covers 3.2 million acres in southern Oregon, including seven smaller watersheds united by their common drainage into the spectacular and scenic Rogue River, which runs from Boundary Springs, near Crater Lake, to the ocean.

Responding to the federal listing of the Coho salmon as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act and proposed listings of steelhead trout and Chinook salmon, in the mid-'90s Oregon developed and implemented the "Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds," a statewide effort to mitigate the existing threats to Oregon's threatened anadromous fish populations. Under the state's program, watershed councils were formed and charged with completing Assessments/Action Plans. At the same time, the Rogue Basin Steering Committee brought the basin councils together to work with cities, counties, and state agencies in a collaborative manner to develop a region-wide perspective on watershed management issues. In 1998 the group reorganized and changed its name to the Rogue Basin Coordinating Council. Among seven priority issue areas, the Council chose to focus much of its energy on fish barriers—the myriad bridges, dams, and culverts that prevent the necessary passage of these fish in their normal life cycle and one of the major obstacles to the recovery of threatened species.

In the Rogue River Basin, WAG funds paid for a facilitator and a project coordinator for the Fish Access Team, a collaborative effort to remove or modify barriers to fish passage. The team accomplished three necessary steps toward the removal of barriers:

1. A comprehensive assessment of all man-made barriers to anadromous fish passage within the Basin.
2. Prioritization of the barriers based on developed criteria.
3. Development of a strategic plan for the removal or modification of fish barriers.

Thanks to the team's hard work, Oregon awarded the Coordinating Council an unprecedented $1 million grant to implement the strategic plan. The state praised the team's efforts as a model for the entire state.

By the end of the Watershed Assistance Grant, the Fish Access Team had identified a total of 412 fish barriers and completed a comprehensive strategic plan to guide the process of barrier removal. More than 1,000 barriers have now been identified.

The WAG Grant and the Fish Access Team

The Council initiated the Rogue Basin Fish Access Team, a collaborative effort created to facilitate the removal or modification of man-made barriers to anadromous fish passage. The five groups that serve on the Access Team are the Rogue River Basin Fish Passage Technical Team, Gravel Pushup Dam Team, Pilot Integration Team, Rogue Basin Technical Team, and Rogue Basin Coordinating Council. In addition to the seven watershed councils represented by the Council, these participating teams include a number of state and federal agencies already working together on various aspects of fish passage barriers. WAG funds allowed the Council to hire two consultants—one to serve as facilitator and the other as project coordinator for the Access Team.

The Team achieved a clear consensus on its goals and priorities and accomplished the necessary first steps toward the removal of fish barriers.

By the end of the Watershed Assistance Grant, a total of 412 barriers had been identified. The team had also completed a 5- to 10-year prioritization of barriers to be removed or modified and a comprehensive strategic plan to guide the process. The group secured two grants from the state and a local foundation to begin project work. Then early this year the Coordinating Council received an unprecedented grant of $1 million from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to support full implementation of the strategic plan. In providing the funds, the Board distinguished the Fish Access Team effort as a model program that could be replicated by groups around the state. This funding has enabled project implementation and staffing. The Fish Access Team will provide oversight in the coordination of the initial 15 projects. In addition, a regional monitoring program has been folded into the plan to follow and document the effects of these projects as they are conducted.

The Council attributes the smooth flow of project activity to the composition and hard work of the Fish Access Team and skillful facilitation. With representation from 10 key agencies and organizations and considerable expertise covering the range of needs, the group had access to the information and skills needed to make the project work. "The participants selected were extremely intelligent and committed to the outcome… and also very cooperative and respectful of each other," according to facilitator Tatiana Bredikin. They also got to know one another well during the intensive 6-month process, to which Bredikin also credits the groups' success. The time commitment was considerable, and participants were willing to attend meetings as well as complete assignments outside the structured periods. According to the Council, the facilitator and project coordinator, funded by the WAG funds, provided outstanding support and facilitation for the Team to move the process forward at all times. Cleary, the group had many characteristics in its favor—the size of the group was optimum, skills were exceptional, the goals were clear, participants were knowledgeable and professional, and a skilled facilitator kept the group on task.

This article is an excerpt from "Watershed Assistance Grants: Building Capacity of Community-Based Watershed Partnerships," a report by Suzanne Easton, consultant for River Network. It was edited with the permission of River Network. Visit ww.rivernetwork.org/howwecanhelp/wageval99.pdf for the full text of the report.

The Rogue River project is truly a major success story for the WAG program. The grant made convening of the Fish Access Team possible and the Team's achievements have gone well beyond all expectations. The $1 million grant from the state is testimony to an exceptionally well-conceived, well-planned, and well-implemented program that seems not to have alienated any major interest groups. With a technically strong plan and sufficient funding, the long-term potential of this program looks impressive, particularly the potential to have a measurable impact on the recovery of fish species.

Leveraging the successful work by the Fish Access Team, made possible by the WAG, the Coordinating Council received an unprecedented $1 million grant from Oregon to implement the strategic plan to improve fish access.

Raised Awareness on the Ruidoso

Ruidoso is a small tourist town high in the mountains of south-central New Mexico. The area is best known as the backdrop for the famous "Lincoln County Wars" of the late 19th century that spawned the infamous legend of Billy the Kid. The town was appropriately named after the swashbuckling Ruidoso River, which means "noisy water" in Spanish.

From its heyday as a high-quality cold-water fishery, the Rio Ruidoso is now listed by the New Mexico Environment Department as one of the most degraded streams in the state. Unbridled development is choking the stream with sediment and nutrients, compounded by unnecessary diversions by the city and by the blasé attitude of the local citizenry. In the summer of 1996, all of these factors combined to dry up the river during the peak of the tourist season.

Five years later, the water in the Rio Ruidoso not only is much cleaner, but also is once again flowing freely. Best management practices are now helping to curb sediment and other runoff pollutants. A local grassroots watershed group, The Ruidoso River Association, Inc., which was not even in existence in 1996, deserves credit for rescuing the troubled river. How did they accomplish this in so little time?

Volunteers received T-shirts

Under a campaign built around the slogan "It's the Economy, Stupid," the association quickly convinced local officials that the Rio Ruidoso was the city's "golden goose" and to let it die would be economic suicide.

They did it by following Franklin D. Roosevelt's advice: "Convince me first and then go out and get a lot of people to put pressure on me." That is to say, they did their homework and exploited a win-win situation. They disseminated information, combated misunderstanding, and recruited new members to gain widespread public support.

A $6,500 Wastershed Assistance Grant received from EPA through River Network in 1999 ignited the organization. The grant gave the Association the wherewithal to sponsor a first-ever watershed-wide convention, which included all of the major stakeholders. The convention gave the Association instant and much-needed visibility and credibility.

Under a campaign built around the slogan "It's the Economy, Stupid," the association quickly convinced local officials that the Rio Ruidoso was the city's "golden goose" and to let it die would be economic suicide. Thanks to a new legal agreement, the city will not divert surface water from the river when low flows threaten its health.

At the same time, the Association's efforts have mobilized the community and engendered genuine concern for the river's water quality. The organizational capacity of the Association has directly benefited. Membership has more than doubled from fewer than 500 to more than 1,000. The annual river cleanup, which 8 years ago drew just a dozen volunteers, drew 766 volunteers and more than 100 local sponsors last summer!

The Ruidoso River Association believes that the Watershed Assistance Grant it received in 1999 made all of the difference.

For more information, contact Dick Wisner, Executive Director, Ruidoso River Association, Inc., P.O. Box 2945, Ruidoso, NM 88355. Phone: 505-257-9494; e-mail: noisywtr@lookingglass.net.

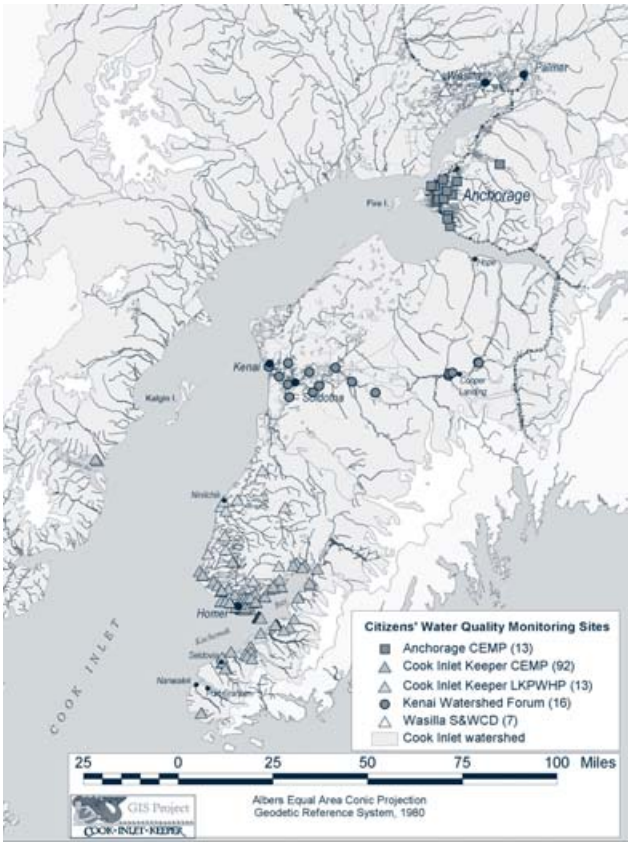
Volunteers removed debris from the river, allowing the water to once again flow freely.

Alaskans Coming Together to Preserve Their Water and Way of Life

Clean water and healthy fisheries are the lifeblood of Alaska's people. Alaska's Cook Inlet watershed is a rich and productive ecosystem that covers 47,000 square miles in the south-central part of the state. Watershed protection is no small task on a scale this big, but thanks to a Watershed Assistance Grant, people throughout south-central Alaska are joining together to protect the vast watershed.

The Cook Inlet watershed is the most populated region in Alaska, but despite the number of residents, the watershed is blessed with natural beauty and abundance. However, a population increase of 600 percent over the past 30 years has substantially magnified pressures on the watershed's salmon streams, wetlands, and coastal estuaries.

Volunteers from Seldovia, Alaska, a remote fishing village, are excited to be a part of Alaska's growing citizen-based water quality monitoring program, made possible by a Watershed Assistance Grant.



In 1999 Cook Inlet Keeper, a citizen-based organization dedicated to protecting the watershed, received a Watershed Assistance Grant. Their objective was to build and strengthen a network among organizations, Native tribes, local governments, and agencies to realize a common goal of habitat and water quality protection.

Although various groups had been working for years on water resource issues in Cook Inlet, many worked in isolation, with no knowledge of what other groups were doing. The Watershed Assistance Grant allowed Cook Inlet Keeper to bring groups together to share knowledge and resources and to coordinate their efforts toward common goals.

To make this happen, Cook Inlet Keeper formally partnered with the University of Alaska, local watershed councils, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to create Alaska's only unified and scientifically defensible citizen-based water quality monitoring program. To date, more than 300 citizens have been trained to collect habitat and water quality data on more than 100 freshwater and estuarine sites throughout the Cook Inlet basin.

In December 2000 more than 25 participants representing 14 different citizen-based organizations, tribes, and governmental agencies attended a meeting to coordinate their watershed monitoring and protection efforts. From this meeting, new partnerships formed. Groups agreed to meet annually and collaborate on joint fundraising efforts. They also agreed to work together to create a unified water quality database where citizens could access and share water quality data. The database also contains links to photos, graphs, and computer maps.

See Cook, page 8

Cook, from page 7

In March 2000 a 4-day Clean Water Act workshop held in collaboration with River Network attracted more than 40 participants from across Alaska, including a majority from remote Alaska Native villages. Participants walked away from the workshop with the necessary legal and regulatory tools to take water quality protection into their own hands.

Because of support from the Watershed Assistance Grants program, the momentum continues to grow toward a more effective and enduring partnership to protect Cook Inlet watershed and its way of life.

For more information about the Cook Inlet Watershed Network, contact Bob Shavelson, Cook Inlet Keeper, P.O. Box 3269, Homer, AK 99603. Phone 907-235-4068; e-mail: bob@inletkeeper.org. Be sure to check out the Cook Inlet monitoring web site at www.inletkeeper.org/monitoring.htm.

Blackfoot Challenge WAG Helps Protect Fishery and Respond to Drought

In anticipation of summer 2000 drought conditions, the Blackfoot Challenge began the difficult task of preparing an emergency drought response plan in the Blackfoot River Basin of western Montana. In developing the plan, they examined how various water conservation measures could help over both the short term and the long term to reduce water withdrawals and enhance the protection and restoration of habitat. The drought response plan is based on the premise of "shared sacrifice" among all water users—irrigators, domestic users, fishing outfitters and floaters—with a goal that all water users cut back use in dry years to achieve water savings to keep stream flows at acceptable levels.

With the help of a Watershed Assistance Grant, what started as an emergency response plan evolved into a water resources management program for the Blackfoot. The strengthened organizational capacity led to greater stakeholder involvement in the Blackfoot watershed-wide planning effort. In 2001 Blackfoot Challenge increased the number of participants and broadened the types of participants to include not only irrigators but also recreational users, a golf course, and homeowners. To raise awareness, they used the media and other outreach tools effectively to reach targeted water users.

In August 2001, as the Blackfoot River's flow dropped to 680 cubic feet per second, irrigators, anglers, fishing guides, and cabin owners came together in an unprecedented alliance intended to curtail the river's use and protect its valuable fishery. The level of commitment to conservation along the Blackfoot and the cooperative spirit have been tremendous. A broad coalition numbering nearly 100 landowners

Save the Date!

May 17–21, 2002
Holiday Inn
SunSpree Resort
Asheville, North Carolina

Plan to join River Network Partners and guests for the 3rd Annual River Rally....a comprehensive conference that offers workshops for all those working to understand, restore, and protect rivers. Workshops will cover leadership development, organizational development, watershed science, self-care, and much more. Asheville offers many wonderful activities, including more than 30 art galleries and rafting on the nearby French Broad, Nantahala, and Pigeon rivers. Rally brochures will be mailed in early January. On-line registration begins January 2, 2002. Visit the River Network site at www.rivernetwork.org for the most current information.

Conversion from flood irrigation to wheel line sprinkler irrigation improved crop efficiencies and in-stream flows in the Blackfoot watershed.

Computerized soil moisture probes allow ranchers and agencies to work together on water efficiencies.

Thanks to support from the WAG, the Blackfoot Challenge monitored and evaluated conservation measures and in-stream flows. As part of this effort, they

* Worked one-on-one with irrigators to evaluate irrigation systems, calculate water flow rates, and assess long-term water conservation.

* Installed flow and thermograph stations; monitored water flows and temperature fluctuations, bull trout health, and other indicators of the status and health of the fisheries.

* Initiated a pilot project involving 11 large irrigators to study irrigation usage and assess overwatering and possible efficiencies based on crop, rotation, and soil.

and water users promised to curtail withdrawals for irrigation as long as the Blackfoot's flow remained below 700 cubic feet per second, the minimum needed for fish to survive with warm temperatures. Commercial fishing guides, private anglers, and other recreational users of the river voluntarily reduced their time on the river during low flows and high temperatures.

In developing a collaborative approach to drought strategy, they successfully minimized adverse impacts on fishery resources and provided for an equitable distribution of water reductions. Even though the river was under stress, no fish kills occurred. The voluntary and government-imposed closures increased flows in certain streams, saving valuable trout populations. By integrating Montana in-stream rights within a broader drought response effort, the Blackfoot Challenge provided an incentive for greater stakeholder participation. Most significantly, they created a cooperative community-wide effort that went beyond the often divisive issue of water rights.

The shared sacrifice plan for water conservation in the Blackfoot during drought years has dramatically benefited in-stream flows. These efforts can serve as a model approach for other watersheds faced with severe drought conditions affecting both fisheries and irrigation.

For more information, contact Tina Bernd-Cohen, Executive Director, Blackfoot Challenge, P.O. Box 563, Helena, MT 59624. Phone: 406-442-4002; fax: 406-442-4114; e-mail: blkfootchallenge@aol.com.

Friends of Lake Wingra Promote a Healthy Lake Through an Active Watershed Community

Lake Wingra provides an oasis of water, woods, and wet lands within the city of Madison, Wisconsin. Although about three-quarters of the watershed is highly urbanized, the shoreline of the 140-hectare lake is largely undeveloped. Surrounding parks and natural areas help create an urban oasis with a wide range of recreational and aesthetic values.

Urbanization in the watershed and impacts on the lake's wetlands, however, have degraded water quality. Effects include excessive storm water runoff and its associated loadings of sediments, nutrients, chloride, and heavy metals; high bacterial levels that threaten swimming; and introductions of nonnative species. Studies have also identified the need for improved coordination among the various agencies involved in lake and watershed management and for more effective citizen involvement in management issues.

To address these needs, the Friends of Lake Wingra (FOLW) was founded in 1998 with the mission "to promote a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed com-

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munity." FOLW, in partnership with Edgewood College, recently received a Watershed Assistance Grant to build organizational capacity and increase citizen involvement. The goals of this project are to build the watershed partnership's capacity to sustain effective communication, collaboration, and action. FOLW used the grant to hire a Watershed Coordinator and strengthen its organizational capacity.

Over the past year, the Watershed Assistance Grant has provided crucial support for a variety of FOLW activities, including the following:

- An annual Lake Wingra Watershed Community Fair, attracting about 200 people and providing workshops and exhibits on issues such as storm water utilities, yard care, composting, outdoor lighting, road salt use, and runoff.
- Rain garden workshops, providing detailed information on the construction of bioretention systems that capture rainwater that would otherwise become harmful runoff.
- A successful campaign to stencil "Dump No Waste, Drains to Lake Wingra" on storm water drains and to distribute fliers to local homes and businesses.
- Collaboration with teachers and students in area schools, including the development of public outreach exhibits.
- Cosponsorship of water quality monitoring and lake cleanup events at Dane County's "Take a Stake at the Lakes" week.

This year the Capital Community Citizens presented FOLW with an "Orchid Award" for its environmental contributions to Dane County. Meanwhile, the organization continues to work on its development and funding. FOLW recently received a Wingra Watershed Poetry Residency grant, which will fund a local poet in two local elementary schools. Working with area neighborhood associations, FOLW will produce a self-guided "Better Lawns & Gutters" watershed tour for the summer of 2002.

FOLW recently held a Wingra Watershed Partner Meeting for all interested agencies, groups, and citizens to set the course for the future. In the next 18 months, FOLW expects that grant funding from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, along with generous support from Edgewood College and area neighborhoods, will allow them to coordinate the participation of agencies, groups, and citizens in developing a comprehensive storm water management plan. This plan will define the roles and responsibilities of multiple partners and interests so that they can better understand the watershed as a functioning system and improve the effectiveness of future management actions.

For more information, contact David Shiffert, Watershed Coordinator, Friends of Lake Wingra. Phone: 608-663-2838; e-mail: dshiffert@edgewood.edu; web site: http://danenet.wicip.org/folw.

Friends of Lake Wingra celebrated their many accomplishments, including an environmental award for their contributions to Dane County.

Adopt Your Watershed Offers On-Line Updates

In 1998 EPA worked with a number of partners to establish a national, on-line database of watershed groups, volunteer monitoring organizations, schools, and others working to protect and restore our nation's water resources. Currently more than 3,000 organizations are listed in EPA's database.

Organizations not in the database can sign up on-line at www.epa.gov/adopt. Click on "Join Now" and fill out the form. (Please be sure to include your URL.) To update records, groups now have the option of going on-line at yosemite.epa.gov/water/adopt.nsf.

Citizen-Based Partnership Launches Mercury TMDL Process

The St. Louis River is one of the largest river systems in Minnesota and is the largest U.S. tributary to Lake Superior. The watershed drains nearly 3,500 square miles in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin, emptying into Lake Superior at its western tip. Mercury concentrations currently exceed the state's water quality standards, and as a result the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has identified the river as an impaired waterbody under the Clean Water Act. Mercury levels in the water column and fish consumption advisories in the river basin are the criteria on which the impairment is based. To restore the waterbody to its designated use as a fishable water, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) will be established to reduce mercury loadings.

In 1998 a group of stakeholders in the watershed gathered to begin this TMDL process. This stakeholder-driven structure gave citizens and industries in the watershed the unique opportunity to work with regulatory agencies from the start. In 1999, the group, which calls itself the St. Louis River Watershed TMDL Partnership, was awarded a Watershed Assistance Grant. The group received the grant to provide administrative support to the Partnership to sustain its efforts and to support public outreach to ensure broad public participation in the development of the mercury TMDL.

During the first year, the Partnership met a number of crucial goals, including the creation of a board of directors. This important step

- Solidified the stakeholder group into a structured partnership with balanced representation from a range of diverse interests.
- Led to the development and acceptance of bylaws and an organizational structure crucial to sustaining the Partnership.
- Ensured continuation of the steps toward TMDL development, by establishing a steering committee charged with day-to-day activities.

The Partnership succeeded in establishing a stakeholder group that has broad representation in the watershed and brought these stakeholders to the table with a common goal. It is this crucial step that has often stalled TMDL development efforts around the country; the St. Louis River Watershed TMDL Partnership made it past this critical hurdle and is proceeding cooperatively in the TMDL process.

Representation is divided into five sectors: nongovernmental organizations (environmental groups), municipal/local/tribal government, business/industry, education/research, and public-at-large. In addition, representatives from EPA, MPCA, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources have been involved with the Partnership since its beginning.

The St. Louis River Watershed TMDL Partnership is currently finalizing a funding agreement with the MPCA to continue in a cooperative role with the agency in TMDL development. Because much of the mercury pollution is from atmospheric sources, the parties will need to determine how atmospheric deposition, particularly deposition from national and global sources, will be addressed as part of the TMDL.

For more information about the St. Louis River Watershed TMDL Partnership, contact Yvonne Rutford Heimer, Administrative Coordinator, P.O. Box 3465, Duluth, MN 55803. Phone: 218-525-6540.

TMDL Listening Sessions

This fall, EPA conducted a series of public listening sessions around the country to solicit stakeholder perspectives on key issues associated with the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program. Under the Clean Water Act, the TMDL program provides a framework for identifying and cleaning up polluted waters. There are an estimated 20,000 polluted waterways nationwide. On July 16, 2001, the Agency announced an 18-month review of the TMDL program. EPA will use the information received at these public listening sessions as it considers changes to the regulations that govern the TMDL program, with a view toward proposing modifications in mid-2002. Hundreds of interested citizens have attended the meetings held thus far in Oklahoma City, Atlanta, Sacramento, and Chicago. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl/meetings/meetings.html.

WAG Helps Woonasquatucket River Council Take Off

The Woonasquatucket River in northwestern Rhode Island is approximately 18 miles long with a 51- square-mile watershed. Despite its small size, the watershed represents a diverse geographic area, originating in a rural setting and flowing downstream through urban communities, including Providence, the second largest city in New England. Approximately 8.5 miles of the river are impaired due to a combination of impacts, including dioxin contamination, combined sewer overflows, nonpoint source pollution, and contaminated sediment—problems that reflect the river's industrial legacy.

With a Watershed Assistance Grant, the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC), a volunteer, community-based organization in Rhode Island, hired a full-time Director to develop and implement education and restoration goals for the watershed. The WRWC community members, who had worked successfully to earn the American Heritage River designation for the Woonasquatucket back in 1998, formed the Council to initiate watershed-wide discussions about local and regional priorities for the River.

The Woonasquatucket River originates in a rural setting.

Recent Highlights

Over the past year, the WRWC has been working with local, state, and federal partners to develop an action plan for the Woonasquatucket that reflects residents' priorities and concerns. The Plan is in its final stages and is scheduled to receive final approval from the Rhode Island Watershed Coordinating Council in December.

A recently completed "Asset Map" highlights the Woonasquatucket's significant historical, cultural, and natural resources.

photo by John McShane

Working collaboratively with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM), the WRWC identified 36 riparian buffer restoration opportunities along the Woonasquatucket. Leveraging funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation under a Five-Star Restoration grant, WRWC will implement one of these restoration projects along the river at a Brownfield Showcase site in Providence. The WRWC is also working with RIDEM on a wetland survey. So far, researchers have identified 160 destroyed wetlands and 250 degraded sites in the watershed.

In the coming year, the WRWC will partner with RIDEM on a Greenspace Planning Grant to help local residents identify and map local natural, cultural, and recreational resources and plan for local and regional greenway linkages of these assets. The WRWC recently completed an "Asset Map" of the watershed that highlights the Woonasquatucket's significant historical, cultural, and natural resources. The map represents a broad collaborative effort among community members, local officials, and state and federal agencies. The WRWC will distribute the map throughout the watershed.

As one of two original watershed pilots in the state, the WRWC is forging new ground in Rhode Island, where the watershed approach is a relatively new concept. In the months since receiving this critical grant from River Network, the WRWC has made significant progress in promoting the Council as a vital, active community-based entity,

pursuing goals and objectives that will revitalize and enhance the river as an asset to communities and promoting awareness to a comprehensive, watershed approach to restoration.

For more information, contact Jenny Pereira, Director, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, 532 Kinsley Avenue, Providence, RI 02909. Phone: 401-861-9046; e-mail: jpereira2@yahoo.com.

The Union River Watershed is committed to raising community awareness of the need to protect the river.

Building the Union River Watershed Coalition Through WAG Support

The story of the Union River in southeast Maine is not unlike the stories of many other rivers throughout New England. Historically, this river knit the region's communities together through the timber and tanning industries, which used the waterway as a highway and a power source. Modern times eliminated this direct need for the river's resources, disconnecting towns, organizations, agencies, and landowners from the river and from each other. But in the fall of 1999, the Union River Watershed Coalition (URWC) came together to change this sense of isolation and to reawaken community awareness throughout the 500-square-mile watershed.

The Coalition's first year focused on identifying stakeholders, establishing a regular meeting schedule, developing a mission statement, and initiating projects. At the end of that year, the Coalition realized that to become a self-sustained entity, effectively working to protect the watershed, it needed to strengthen its capacity. This would require reaching out to identified stakeholders and writing a strategic plan. In January 2001, the Union River Watershed Coalition received a Watershed Assistance Grant to accomplish this important task. Now, after eight months of preparation, the Coalition is about to hold its final strategic planning retreat to make key management decisions.

Additional outreach made possible by the WAG has helped shape a monitoring program and baseline study that will begin in 2002–2003. It has also aided volunteer recruitment and allowed the Coalition to establish priorities for both its organizational structure and the projects it will support.

Through the WAG program, the URWC has had the opportunity to

- **Reach out to stakeholders.**
- **Find out what projects are in progress.**
- **Address specific data or technical assistance needs.**
- **Assess the use of the river and its lakes.**
- **Educate the community about important watershed issues, including resources, history, industries, and development trends.**
- **Gain a sense of public sentiment toward the river and the concept of a watershed coalition.**

By focusing on strategic planning and organizational development, the URWC has demonstrated its commitment to raise community awareness of this incredible resource and to monitor and publicize the watershed's health over the long term. A stronger coalition has attracted financial and community support for oral history projects and fostered a significant collaboration between the Coalition and College of the Atlantic to develop a watershed-based planning and policy curriculum and outreach program. Through the network and resources of the URWC, stakeholders and citizens are working together to address threats to the Union River watershed.

For more information, contact Amy Scott, Coordinator, Union River Watershed Coalition, 105 Eden Street, Bar Harbor, ME 04609. Phone: 207-288-5015; e-mail: ascott@ecology.coa.edu.

New Resources

Capacity Building

A new web site designed by the Nonpoint Source Capacity Building and Funding Work Group provides watershed groups and local governments links to technical tools for scientific support, engineering support, information technology, assistance with legal issues, project management, outreach, and planning support. It also provides links to resources for activities such as permitting, enforcement, contracting, fundraising, and resource management. Check out the new site at www.epa.gov/owow/nps/capacity/index.

BASINS Version 3.0

A new version of BASINS is now available on CD-ROM. BASINS, a powerful tool for managing watersheds, is a multipurpose environmental analysis system that integrates a geographic information system (GIS), national watershed data, and state-of-the-art environmental assessment and modeling tools into one convenient package. BASINS 3.0 introduces two new water quality models (PLOAD and SWAT), several new tools, updated national datasets, and an on-line help feature. For more information, see www.epa.gov/ost/basin.

Linking Girls to the Land Web Site

EPA is hosting a new "Linking Girls to the Land" web site, designed to provide information to Girl Scouts and their leaders, as well as resource agencies. *Linking Girls to the Land* brings together federal natural resource agency professionals to offer conservation and outdoor environmental education projects for Girl Scouts. Other

federal partners include the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. Visit the new site at www.epa.gov/owow/adopt/linkgirls. Read about a recent event that Govenor Whitman participated in with local Girl Scouts!

Volunteer Wetlands Monitoring

EPA Wetlands Division has developed *Volunteer Wetlands Monitoring: An Introduction and Resource Guide*, which is intended to serve as an introduction to why and how people monitor wetlands. The document is available on-line only at www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/monitor/volmonitor.html.

Guiding Principles for Constructed Treatment Wetlands

Guiding Principles for Constructed Treatment Wetlands: Providing Water Quality and Wildlife Habitat offers assistance for developers, municipalities, and others interested in using constructed wetlands as treatment systems, including information on legal, technical, and policy issues. If planned properly, treatment wetlands offer opportunities to regain some of the natural functions of wetlands and to offset losses in wetland acreage. The booklet is available by calling the Wetlands Helpline at 800-832-7828. (Ask for EPA 843-B-00-003.)

Proceedings from the Sixth National Volunteer Monitoring Conference, "Moving Into the Mainstream," held April 26–29, 2000 in Austin, Texas are available on-line at www.epa.gov/owow/volunteer/proceedings/sixth/toc.html.

Earth Force/GREEN Launches Exciting New Web Site

The Earth Force/GREEN site at www.green.org allows users to enter, analyze, and share their data as they work to improve their local water resources. The site is adaptable to virtually any water monitoring protocol and includes hundreds of free resources, including interactive maps that allow users to plot their monitoring site, data sheets, simple monitoring guides, and data analysis tools. Through the site, users can keep an ongoing project log to track their progress and share pictures and stories of their group in action.

The site is also customizable to allow water monitoring organizations the ability to track and download data from all of their volunteers. Check it out at www.green.org. If you want information about customizing the site for your water monitoring organization, contact Earth Force at 703-519-6864. GREEN, which stands for Global Rivers Environmental Education Network, offers an entire family of integrated monitoring and action tools on the site as well.

Events ...

January 2002

26 *Tooltime for Streams: Northern Virginia Stream Confluence*, Sterling, Virginia. This event is meant to provide attendees with useful tools to help make the streams of Northern Virginia clean and full of life. Contact Piedmont Environmental Council. Phone: 540-347-233.

February 2002

3–5 *Inorganic Contaminants Workshop*, San Diego, California. This 3-day workshop provides a unique opportunity to explore and exchange the latest information on inorganic contaminants. Contact Susan Gunzner, American Water Works Association. Phone: 303-347-6210; e-mail: sgunzner@awwa.org .

23–27 *Watershed 2002*, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Sponsors: The Water Environment Federation (WEF) and the Florida Water Environment Association with the support of the USEPA Office of Water. Contact: Greg McNelly, WEF, 601 Wythe Street, Alexandria, VA 22031. Phone: 703-684-2400, e-mail: gmcnelly@wef.org, web site: www.wef.org/Conferences.

18–22 *Conference on Stormwater and Urban Water Systems Modeling*, Toronto, Ontario. This annual international conference is a forum for professionals from across North America and overseas to exchange ideas and experience on current practices and emerging technologies. Contact Lyn James. Phone: 519-767-0197; e-mail: info@chi.on.ca; web site: www.chi.on.ca/conferencetoronto.html.

25–Mar 1 *Adventures in Erosion Education, 33rd Annual IECA Conference and Expo*, Orlando, Florida. The International Erosion Control Association (IECA) hosts the world's largest gathering of erosion control professionals. Contact IECA, P.O. Box 774904, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477. Phone: 970-879-3010; web site: www.ieca.org. Receive a $25 discount for registering on-line.

27–Mar 1 *5th National Mitigation Banking Conference*, Washington, DC. Mitigation bankers will meet with regulators and critics to discuss mutual problems and emerging markets. This is the one conference that connects the entire industry and becomes a how-to for resolving banking problems. Contact Terrene Institute. Phone: 703-548-5473; e-mail: terrinst@aol.com; web site: www.terrene.org.

26–Mar 1 *11th International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species*, Alexandria, Virginia. Sponsor: US Army Engineer Research and Development Center. E-mail: profedge@renc.igs.net; web site: www.aquatic-invasive-species-conference.org.

March 2002

11–13 *Watershed Management to Meet Emerging TMDL Environmental Regulations Conference*, Fort Worth, Texas. This Conference and Exhibition will serve as a forum to review current research practices, and state-of-the-art theory dealing with watershed management issues as they relate to emerging environmental regulations. Contact Brenda West, ASAE, 2950 Niles Road, St. Joseph, MI 49085. Phone: 616-428-6327; e-mail: west@asae.org.

18–20 *11th Annual Southeastern Lakes Management Conference*, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Contact Barbara Wiggins. Phone: 828-254-5644; web site www.don~anderson.com/selalms2002.

25–26 *Tugis 2002: 15th Annual Geographic Information Science Conference*, Towson, Maryland. Sponsors: The Center for Geographic Information Sciences at Towson University and Towson University's Department of Geography and Environmental Planning. The theme this year is "Thinking Outside of the Box: New GIS Users and New GIS Applications." Visit the web site at http://cgis.towson.edu/tugis2002 for more information.

April 2002

13–17 *National Planning Conference*, Chicago, Illinois. The American Planning Association is sponsoring this conference that brings together more than 5,000 planners, elected officials, and civic activists to share practices. For more information, visit www.planning.org.

25–27 *Third Annual Natural Stream Channel Design Summit*, State College, Pennsylvania. Contact Lesley Moore. Phone: 814-768-9584; e-mail: lesley.moore@canaanvi.org.

May 2002

17–21 *River Rally 2002*, Asheville, North Carolina. River Network's third annual River Rally offers workshops for all those working to understand, restore, and protect rivers. Online registration begins January 2, 2002. Visit the River Network web site at www.rivernetwork.org. Contact Robin Chanay. Phone: 202-364-2550; e-mail: riverrally@rivernetwork.org.

13–15 *AWRA's Annual Spring Conference "Coastal Water Resources"*, New Orleans, Louisiana. This conference will address a wide range of interdisciplinary concerns about coastal, estuarine, and inland systems. AWRA, 4 West Federal Street, P.O. Box 1626, Middleburg, VA 20118. Phone: 540-687-8390; web site: www.awra.org.

20–23 *Third National Water Quality Monitoring Conference*, Madison, Wisconsin. Sponsor: National Water Quality Monitoring Council. The theme for this year's conference is "Water Quality Monitoring 2002: Building a Framework for the Future." Web site: www.nwqmc.org.

Calling All Photographers!

Wetlands Photo Contest

The Environmental Protection Agency's Wetlands Division is sponsoring a wetlands photography contest focusing on images that show the functions and values of wetlands. We are seeking high-quality photographs of wetlands in different regions of the country and at different seasons of the year. The winning photographs will be displayed at the National Wetland Awards ceremony in Washington, DC, in May 2002 and will be used to produce an EPA wetland poster and publication.

For more information and details on how to submit your photograph, please go to www.epa/owow/wetlands/photocontest. If you have any questions or need additional information, please call our Wetlands Helpline at 800-832-7828.

photo by John McShane

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Environmental Protection Agency
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Washington, DC 20460

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